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PP RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHBUL #4326/01 2641455  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 211455Z SEP 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2717  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2858  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2990  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6319  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1668

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 KABUL 004326

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/20/2016

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SUBJECT: PRT/MEHTARLAM - THE AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE AND  
PROVINCIAL INSECURITY IN LAGHMAN

REF: KABUL 4232

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Richard Norland for reasons 1.4 b  
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11. (SBU) Summary: The Afghan National Police (ANP) is the predominant Afghan government institution responsible for the security of Laghman province. Its recent performance has engendered mistrust by the local population and is in many cases directly responsible for the deterioration in security particularly observable in the districts of Dowlatabad and Alishang. This has allowed Taliban officials to operate with relative impunity while they attempt to destabilize the current district and provincial governments. End summary.

12. (SBU) The current ability and operational state of the ANP as a source of concern was discussed at recent PRT related conferences at Coalition Force, Regional Command (RC) East, ISAF, RC West and NATO, Kabul Headquarters. Mission, personnel and logistics are all problematic. Reports from all over the country describe an inadequately trained and resourced institution still largely influenced by corruption instead of professionalism. Laghman, experience is exacerbated by the fact that, unlike some provinces, it lacks other security forces which could supplement its ability to defend the government, enforce the law and improve the security posture of the province.

Mission Versus Reality

13. (C) Laghman, Afghan National Security Forces

(ANSF) are composed of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) and the ANP. It lacks Border Police, Highway Police and a full time ANA encampment (the ANA is currently limited to a company sized unit collocated with the PRT for training by ETT,s). The ANP suffers from the public perception that it is responsible not only for protecting them from criminal activities but also from insurgents. The ANP, lacking sufficient manpower, firepower, training, equipment, will and leadership, is simply incapable of acting as a viable entity to prevent a counter-insurgency. In at least two districts (Dowlat Shah and Alishang) they have reached mutual non-aggression pacts with local Anti-Government Elements (AGE.) AGE,s can and do walk armed through the bazaar in Qalai Najil, Dowlat Shah district. Indeed they recently replaced an Afghan flag there with a Taliban flag despite the presence of police. This aptly demonstrated the weakness of the government to district inhabitants and was a prelude to a Taliban "takeover" of the area. Approximately 120 ANA and PRT personnel responded to the reported presence of Taliban. The ANP was not in evidence. Although the Taliban were unable to control the town during the daylight hours, they took up a position on the high ground overlooking the village. When at the end of five days the GoA/CF personnel departed the area, the Taliban had not moved from their positions.

#### Personnel

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KABUL 00004326 002 OF 005

14. (U) The typical ANP policeman is poorly trained, clothed, equipped, paid and motivated. They are all supposedly graduates of the Regional Training Centers (RTC), but give no evidence of the professional behavior expected of trained individuals. The ANP who have accompanied PRT missions routinely wander about looking to acquire items the PRT has planned to hand out to local individuals. Those that do pay attention to security tend to hit or threaten individuals who crowd PRT personnel. While villagers seem to take this behavior in stride, the PRT has been obliged to limit ANP assistance in order to minimize the effect this has on people,s perceptions of the PRT mission. In one case, while the PRT was conducting a shura for which it had provided food, the ANP deserted their posts to take places at tables in order to eat, obliging invited guests to stand and forego the meal. This is indicative of a lack of leadership, even though there is a disproportionate ratio of officers (one for each 1.78 policemen) in the department. Even when mentors are in place at the PRT, there are insufficient resources to let them get to the required locations to evaluate, monitor and mentor police personnel. The public relations value of the ANP as a government institution is distinctly negative.

#### Lack of Equipment

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15. (U) The ANP lacks a sufficient amount of everything. There is an insufficient supply of AK-47,s for each policeman to have his own. Most of these are Czech made, which are said to jam after one or two shots. They have not been trained to clean their weapons, and there are in any case no cleaning kits. Smith and Wesson 9mm pistols have recently been issued, but the recipients have not been trained in their use, despite reports to the contrary. In one case, a proud policeman was seen

with a holstered pistol that still had an orange safety plug for shipping still in the breach, and was surprised to hear that the weapon wouldn't fire with it in place. Until last month, provincial policemen typically had between one and three magazines containing 20-30 rounds each. They were understandably reluctant to engage with such limited ammunition. Though additional ammunition has been shipped, it is uncertain whether it has been distributed to the field. Heavy weapons are asked for at every meeting. The police find it difficult to defend their positions, even when this does not require going outside of their compounds, since their adversaries have rockets, RPG,s, and both heavy and light machine guns. As mentioned above, there is no backup for an attack without using the ANA trainees and turning the PRT into a kinetic force.

¶6. (C) A lack of equipment prevents communications at a provincial level (even cell phone service is problematic to non-existent in most of the districts) and between units within a given district. Some district Chiefs of Police (CoP) have bought walkie-talkies to facilitate communication, but these are not secure and everyone can and does

KABUL 00004326 003 OF 005

listen in. Remote observation posts lacking communications equipment are unable to warn their colleagues of suspicious activities observed. Vehicles are also lacking. Three pickups have recently been delivered, but this is less than one per district in a province where unimproved roads limit speeds to roughly 10km/hour. This limits the ability of the police to patrol regularly, let alone respond to reports of illegal activity. This lack of presence leads to a lack of confidence in ability and willingness of the police to respond to criminal activity. Corruption at the highest levels of the department further limits mobility by siphoning off fuel allotments. Insufficient uniforms, footwear and food contribute to a lack of morale, but the greatest personnel problem is the inadequate salary. A policeman typically earns 70 USD per month, only half of what it takes to barely feed and clothe a family. Policemen are not shy about admitting that corruption is the only way that they can support their families. This is the most commonly mentioned problem that people cite when discussing their dislike of the ANP. A recently instituted direct pay program has prevented 100 Afghans (2 USD) from being siphoned off their monthly salary.

#### ANP Relations with Provincial Partners

¶7. (U) The ANP not only lacks the trust of the populace, it is also not trusted by the other ANSF institutions it needs to collaborate with to enhance provincial security. This is partly historical and institutionalized, and partly due to a lack of trust by the individual players. The new CoP has instructed his subordinates not to share information of any consequence with colleagues at the daily Provincial Coordination meetings initiated by the PRT that are intended to foster cooperation and a quick response to security problems. Many cases never get to the prosecutor,s office due to corruption that allows arrested individuals to go free. Many other cases which do get to the prosecutor,s office are without sufficient or proper evidence, so these people are released by the prosecutor. While proper training by the prosecutor,s office can improve the latter, the current effect is that the department is not even

respected by the criminals.

#### Lack of Leadership

18. (C) Unprofessional leadership allows dysfunctional command and control functions to persist. The previous provincial police chief, Gul Karim, was an illiterate, uneducated and corrupt former mujahid who was rarely present in the province and unconcerned with any professional aspects of his position. The current police chief, Haji Mohammad Leqha, is unqualified, having been added at the last minute to the laboriously vetted list of approved officers due to political considerations. His current probationary status is due to reports of human rights abuses, corruption and kidnapping during his previous tenures as CoP in other provinces. Unfortunately, the governor of the province had no influence over Leqha's appointment,

KABUL 00004326 004 OF 005

nor over the appointment of the district police chiefs. Mukhles, until recently the district CoP in Dowlath Shah, also filled that position last summer. At that time he is rumored to have been paying a monthly 150,000 Afghani stipend to the then-provincial CoP and charging a 15,000 Afghani protection fee to district poppy farmers. Mukhles, assassinated father's legacy has encumbered him with personal problems that preclude his safe movement within the district and keeps him from being actively involved in directing police activities. His recent reassignment as the head of security for the central district of Mehtarlam bodes well for Dowlath Shah but poorly for the capital. Meanwhile, the district CoPs in Alishang and Alingar districts are said to currently pay a monthly 100,000 Afghani (2000 USD) stipend to the CoP. Both of these, as well as Makhles, are junior in rank to others within their districts.

19. (SBU) The governor has attempted to improve the ANP presence by preventing the ANP from serving in their home districts, where personal loyalties and interests trump institutional ones. A number of ANP have used their position to settle family related disputes. The CoP has until now declined to follow through on this request. The governor has also sought to change the CoP and all but one of the district CoPs, but to no avail. Current middle and senior management is demoralized and more than a dozen officers have threatened to tender their resignations. Nepotism has caused one of the most senior officers to be sent to Kabul by the CoP in an attempt to replace him with an unprofessionally trained relative described as corrupt.

#### Comments

10 (SBU) PRT Comment: The police are responsible for the security of society. The difficulties with the ANP may be endemic to all provinces, but they are especially problematic in Laghman. Until police reform encompassing professional qualifications and a realistic salary structure occurs, ANP provincial leadership will favor personal gain at the expense of provincial security and the problem will fester. There are a number of intelligent, hard working, experienced, dedicated, sincere, educated, professionally committed individuals in Laghman who are capable of transforming the institution into one with a positive stature, but it is essential to get responsible leadership at the top before any improvement can be expected which will change the

reality on the ground in this province.

¶11. (SBU) Embassy Comment: The situation of the ANP in Laghman, typical of that found in many provinces, cannot be fixed overnight. Rooting out corruption and developing real leadership will take time and commitment. In the meantime, this PRT report highlights the importance of quickly moving forward with the development of a smaller, professionally trained and equipped force that can protect districts like Dowlat Shah and support the shakier rank and file ANP. The civil order maintenance/constabulary force concept reported reftel has this underlying purpose. However, even the COM/C will take

KABUL 00004326 005 OF 005

some time to develop, train, and deploy. In the meantime we will continue to work with the MoI on removing corrupt and incompetent police officials at the provincial and district level, move forward with pay and rank reform, and explore innovative short term solutions to the serious problems faced by the ANP.  
NORLAND